

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

June 7, 2002

TO: K. Fortenberry, Technical Director
FROM: D. Grover and M. Sautman, Hanford Site Representatives
SUBJ: Activity Report for the Week Ending June 7, 2002

Tank Farms: The CH2M Hill Hanford Group (CHG) Operations Vice President called a safety time out Thursday to discuss lessons learned from recent events (see last week's report). CHG Management is increasing their focus on reducing human error events. (I-C)

Plutonium Finishing Plant (PFP): Bob McQuinn, PFP Director, announced that he will leave PFP at the end of September. Scott Sax, the current PFP Deputy Director, will replace him. In addition, PFP announced a reorganization to reflect their increasing focus on upcoming decommissioning activities.

PFP emptied their last container of plutonium solution and was close to finishing precipitation as the week ended. This leaves one drum of organic plutonium solution left to be addressed. The Board staff's position was that Fluor Hanford needed to ensure that no further repackaging or stabilization was needed to ship this container to the Waste Isolation Pilot Plant (WIPP) before considering this item finished. A few weeks ago, this tar-like solution was scooped into a labpack with a ladle because a pump designed for highly viscous solutions could not pump it. However, this week when the jars were inspected, they were found to contain mostly free liquid. The WIPP Waste Acceptance Criteria does not allow free liquids. The nitric acid present may also make this material RCRA corrosive, which has to be a liquid by definition. The cause for the drastic change in material form is not known, although it might be temperature related. One positive thing is that the new form has made characterization sampling much easier. (III-A)

T-Plant: T-Plant conducted the in-briefing to initiate the third contractor Operational Readiness Review (ORR) for increasing the facility hazard classification and removal of spent fuel. The review is expected to start on June 10 and last two weeks. T-Plant had brought in mentors in the areas of radiation control, conduct of operations, and engineering to aid in resolving issues from the previous ORRs, however, Fluor Hanford readiness preparation mentors were not instituted in time to assist T-Plant. The DOE ORR team has coordinated efforts and developed the plans of action with the contractor team to allow observation of the operation demonstrations in parallel. The implementation of this is likely to be problematic as fire hazard analysis restrictions and physical space limitations in some operations areas will make it difficult for both teams to adequately evaluate performance. (III-A)

Rec. 2000-2: The Site Reps met with the Richland Assistant Manager for Safety and Engineering due to concerns with the timeliness of issuing the reports for the PFP and 222-S ventilation Phase 2 Assessments that began in January and early April, respectively. In addition, the T Plant ORR (see above) has been delaying the T Plant ventilation Phase 2 assessment. (I-C)

Spent Nuclear Fuel Project (SNFP): The SNFP has issued the conduct of operations improvement plan which has been in development for several months. Areas planned for improvement include increasing the reliability of operator performance and line management oversight. (III-A)

cc: Board Members